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Southern Kentucky 2016 Recruitment Sweep Report

Overview

Over the past few years, the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) along with ESCORT has offered assistance to regions on a rotating basis through means of a recruitment sweep. This year, recruitment assistance was provided to the Southern Region. This report reflects the implementation, summary, and recommendations of the recruitment sweep executed in Jessamine, Garrard, Wayne, Taylor/Campbellsville and Green Counties.

The main goal of the sweep was to identify and recruit new migrant families and youth into the Kentucky Migrant Education Program (KY MEP). Other goals included surveying the areas to identify recent migrant patterns in order to develop appropriate recruiting strategies; provide an opportunity to identify training and resource needs for local recruitment efforts; and to provide training opportunity for KY MEP to develop their own sweep.

During the week of June 20-23, 2016, a team of ten (10) MEP staff set out to work the Southern Region. The team consisted of Christina Benassi, KY Identification & Recruitment (ID&R) Coordinator; Lupi Ginn, ESCORT Senior Recruiter; Michael Hay, Southern Region Director; Tommy Fox, Southern Region State Recruiter; Pedro Santiago, Northern Region State Recruiter; Robert Bell, Northern Region Recruiter; Betty Perkins, Southern Region Outreach Specialist; Connie Granados, Central Region State Recruiter; Brenda Hernandez, Eastern Region State Recruiter; and Steve Turner, Adair County Contact.

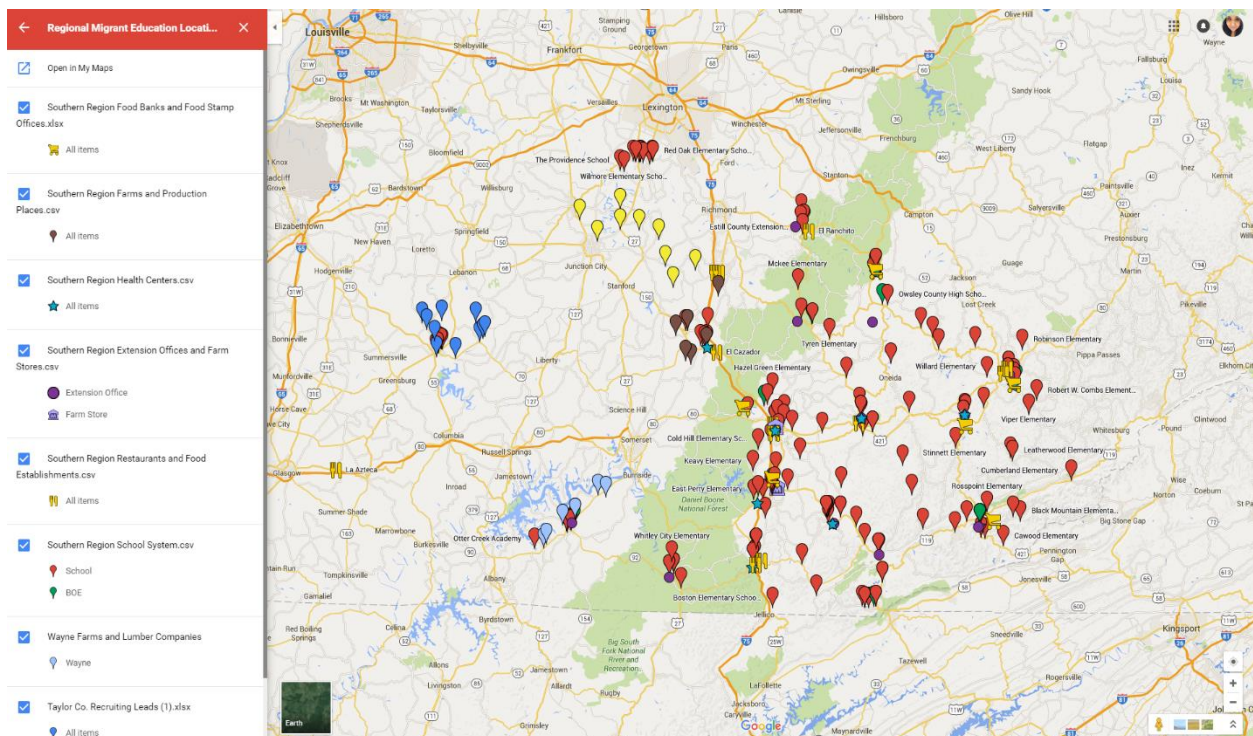
On Monday, June 20, 2016, the team met in Nicholasville to discuss the goals of the sweep and to review the tentative schedule for the week. The purpose of the meeting was also to

ensure that everyone had a common understanding of the sweep and that members understood what was expected of them. Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday were spent recruiting. On Friday, the team met in Greensburg to debrief, discuss the highlights of the week, and to make recommendations for future recruitment efforts in the Southern Region.

The following describes the schedule implemented during the 2016 recruitment sweep. At the end of each day, the recruitment sweep teams met for daily debriefs and made changes to the agenda as needed.

Monday 6/20	Tuesday 6/21	Wednesday 6/22	Thursday 6/23
Jessamine	Jessamine/Garrard	Wayne	Taylor/Campbellsville

Leads that were already gathered by the local MEP staff were shared, along with Google maps during this meeting (*see below*). These leads provided effective groundwork for the team. All of the leads shared during the introductory meeting were followed up. New leads were also gathered and followed up during the week.



Summary

The most important highlight of this sweep is the team identifying eight (8) new eligible migrant children/youth into the MEP. The fact that six (6) of these children/youth came from non-program districts strongly suggests that there are still migrant workers in the area that have not yet been identified. The breakdown of the Certificates of Eligibility (COEs) is as follows:

- Garrard County – 2 COEs
- Wayne County – 1 COE
- Taylor County – 5 COEs

During the sweep, the team uncovered a potential new crop. The 2016 Industrial Hemp Research Pilot Program is underway and so far the Kentucky Department of Agriculture has compiled a list of 167 contracted participants including both growers and processors. The team was able to speak to a grower who stated that hemp was a labor-intensive crop. He claimed both the harvesting and processing phases of hemp required a significant amount of manual labor. There are no workers being brought in at this time since the pilot program is still in development. However, the KY MEP should research all activities relating to this potential new crop to see if any activity may be eligible for the KY MEP in accordance to the Non-Regulatory Guidance (NRG).

The sweep team used the United States Department of Labor's iCERT Visa Portal System. This system allows farmers to apply and bring in H2A Agricultural workers to work their land. This was fruitful as six (6) H2A workers were found eligible and recruited for the Southern Region.

The KY MEP has developed a new State Recruiter role which started July 1, 2015. The idea of this role is to provide each region with a recruiter with the flexibility to not only recruit in their assigned regions, but to also participate in statewide recruitment efforts, such as this recruitment sweep. Four (4) state recruiters were hired and participated in the sweep. Since these were newly hired staff, everyone was able to learn and implement new ID&R strategies and suggestions from each other. These strategies and suggestions included a review of terminology and phrases that can help clarify ID&R work, such as appropriate times to use “migrant” (as opposed to “immigrant”), and incorporating phrases such as “following the tobacco trail” (to find farms that would be invisible otherwise) or “on-the-ground-shadowing.” As a result, recruiters are now able to take new ideas and methods back to their regions. All team members enjoyed the camaraderie that came from spending a week with recruiters from all over the state.

An important and essential first step of every sweep activity is to get information about the MEP out to areas that are both familiar and unfamiliar with the MEP. Marketing the MEP would not just expand the number of leads we gathered during the week, but would also start to build a good rapport with the community. The teams handed out brochures that explained the program to possible leads. National Migrant Education Hotline cards were handed out to also increase the number of leads generated. At the end of the sweep the team felt that our presence in the community did not just generate new leads but will continue discussions about the MEP.

As mentioned before, one of the goals for the sweep was to identify any new migrant patterns. The team realized the importance of implementing a sweep during key agricultural peak phases. There are roughly nine (9) phases of tobacco: seeding the trays, planting (in the ground), weeding/hoeing/cleaning, topping, cutting, hanging, smoking (tobacco is cured by smoke in some areas of the state), stripping and bailing. At the time of the sweep, planting tobacco was

completed and the cutting had not yet started. Therefore, some workers had left while others had not yet arrived. Timing is always crucial when finding migrant families. If the sweep was scheduled a few weeks later, the tobacco may have been ready to cut making it easier to find additional migratory workers in the tobacco fields. However, given that the sweep took place between the planting and cutting phase, the team was still able to identify some new migrant families and youth into the KY MEP.

Recommendations

As mentioned earlier, this report includes recommendations that were observed from implementation of the sweep and could be useful for future recruitment efforts.

- The regional office should follow up with recently recruited families and Out-of-School Youth to ensure that the services discussed during the interview are provided (when available). Providing the families and youth with resources right away leaves them with a good impression of the MEP.
- Sweep should occur during the planting, cutting or harvesting of tobacco rather than in between. This allows recruiters to have more contact with the actual workers in the fields during these critical tobacco phases.
- The regional and local programs should continue to utilize and enhance the contacts and resources list included in this report. The local program did well at gathering information. Next, each region should think about using a format where each lead has a possible action item listed. Leads should be prioritized, priority-low/high to ensure maximize lead efficiency. Some of the information collected could include: Date, Lead, Outcome, and Priority Level.
- More detail should be included in the notes portion of the leads collected. A template could be developed with types of questions that a recruiter would ask an establishment, a community agency and a farmer to maximize lead efficiency. Example, if team stopped at a restaurant, some questions would include:
 - *“What time of the day are more workers expected to visit? Lunch? Dinner?”*
 - *“Is there a time of the year where your establishment sees an influx of workers? If so, when?”*
- Continue to establish relationships with the farmers and maintain contact with them once the relationships are established. This contact could be via phone and could be done quarterly to reassure farmers that you have their workers’ benefit in mind.
- Regional offices should continue utilizing the United States Department of Labor’s iCERT Visa Portal System to identify potential H2A agricultural workers. It is important to conduct inquiries during low recruitment times as well as right before peak recruitment time to ensure all new worker requisitions are caught.

- Consider switching the teams around during the week. This brings more diverse experiences to each group and also allows for more exchange of ID&R strategies.
- The KY MEP should further research the Industrial Hemp Research Pilot Program as a potential new crop. The KY MEP should attempt to identify the activities being performed in this industry to determine if they would be considered “qualifying work” for the MEP.